THE GREEN HERON.

The Curious Characteristics of a Remark-able Bird. Well in the rear guard of the vernal migrations straggles a bird that seems es perially marked for the unmerited con' tumely of human bipeds. Boys assail him with stones and sportsmen casually let off a cartridge at him, just to see if their gun is in good killing condition. Rustics, in all quarters, slander him with a multitude of indelicate and reproachful names. Indeed, it would appear as if rural vulgarity were taxed to coin unpleasant descriptive terms by which to designate him. Notwithstanding this most absurd popular prejudice, the little green heron is, in the words of Dr. Coues, "a pretty and engaging species."



Wilson, the poet-naturalist, as well as a host of recent writers, pays this heron a complimentary tribute, widely at variance with the ridiculous and distasteful ideas so universally entertained.

North America has a fine array of herons. Not less than a round dozen of species make up the list, while in Europe only two are at all common, the few other species mentioned being only visitors, more or less rare. The heron of Northern Europe—the bird embelmed in song and story as the noblest quarry at which King or Prince could fly his falcons—the bird which it were death, in mediaval times, for villeins to harm—is still carefully protected in En-gland. It is closely related to our "great blue" heron, but it is not so large nor so handsome, and presumably less courage-ous than the latter. The large herons are everywhere shy and wary birds. Their great bulk and imposing carriage make them a conspicuous target for gunners, and their hereditary suspicion is intensified by personal experience of the treachery of man until they show an eagerness to vacate the neighborhood at his approach that effectually precludes all attempts at close observation. The smaller kinds, on the contrary, manifest but little timidity, and were they not persecuted would soon familiarize themselves with the doings of civilization.

The green heron is, says a writer in the American Magazine, by far the most common of his family, and is the smallest, with the exception of the least bittern, which latter is always scarce, though widely dis-tributed. There is nothing in the appearance or habits of the green heron to justify the obloquy cast on him by the unthinking; and it is probable that he only receives, as the most widely known of American herons, a survival of the crude potions of the natural history of his family that were current among the ignorant of a former age.
Wilson thought this heron was, above all

birds, the least dependent on the good will of man, as the character and abundant nature of his food forestalled any necessity for the destruction of objects useful to humanity. The only peccadillo that has ever been charged against the green heron is the taking of fry from the ponds of fish hatch-eries, and this only since the great diminution of aquatic life; the result of the in-reasing pollution of our lesser waters. The food of the green heron consists of small frogs and a variety of fish, as well as makes, newts and some large insects. To rocore this varied menu be wades stealthily in the shallow water, or sits, with re-tracted neck upon a convenienting or stone, warily watching the approach of his prey, which he grasps with a lightning like movement of his tenuous body. The little " peeplng" frogs (hylus) tax the heron's skill to the utmost; light and agile, they often clude the quickest strokes, forcing their would-be captor to score many a miss.

The green heron is almost exclusively diurnal in habits, though he is most active during the quiet hours of early morning and the dusk of evening, probably because of the



"PROGY" TO THE RESCUE

greater facility of taking food at those times. His flight is easy and deliberate, but not very graceful. The long neck is drawn upward until the bill seems to project from the breast, and the equally long legs are trailed behind, in the manner of all herons. His slow flight, so tempting for a shot, can be greatly accelerated when the bird is frightened, and the quickness with which he "makes tracks," when suddenly flushed, has given him the least objectionsble of his common names-that of "fly-up-

Green herons are more or less sociable, and may be found breeding, in pairs or communities, anywhere in suitable localities. As if understanding the persecution their eggs and young are subjected to by the traditional wicked small boy, they choose a dark and all but impenetrable thicket of scrub pines or thorn bushes. It is not to be supposed that a bird constructed on the heron plan should prove a neat arch freet; and in truth, the nest is a somewhat slovenly affair, composed of sticks and twigs, without lining and barely large enough to contain the three or four pale green chalky

They do not hurry their house-keeping arrangements. It is usually well toward July before the young are fiedged; but long before this they have been crowded from the narrow nest, and are obliged to cling, in their unsteady way, to the neighboring branches. The youngsters are exceedingly ugly. Their awkward bodies, scantily covered with ragged gray down; their bulging, whitish eyes and puffy legs make from the first an unfavorable impression, which savage shyness and barsh voices do not tend to remove The parents, while unable to effect much, show considerable spirit in defending their ill favored brood. They hover about, exposing themselves to any danger, and give vent by hoarse cries to their impotent fury. Much food is required to forward the rapid growth of the young berons; a portion, either through clumsi-ness or satiety, being allowed to fall to the ground, where it soon develops an odor very characteristic of heronries in general

I once secured, after a prolonged and far from scathless scramble among the thorny branches of a wild plum thicket, a pair of these unpromising infants, as yet in their callow immaturity. At first they seemed intractable, but a sufficiency of good food

and immunity from further mjury soon gained their confidence, and they grew, in course of time, excessively tame, even invading the sacred precincts of the farmhouse kitchen. Their appetites were enormous and seemed to increase with time, so that it became a formidable matter to supply the necessary provender. Suakes, fish, grubs, grasshoppers and odd scraps of fish, grubs, grasshoppers and odd soraps of uncooked meat disappeared with perfect

impartiality into their voracious maws. A heron's throat is very dilatable, and they can swallow substances that appear enormous in comparison with that organ. When one undertakes the ingestion of a large, flat fish, the neck, expanding to socommodate its form, presents a most curious appearance. Should the object be very long, as a snake or cel, the heron coolly puts it down as far as it will go and complacently waits, with outstretched neck, until the part first swallowed digests away, when another section is engulfed. The action of the gastric juke in the stomachs of fish-eating birds is so rapid that it takes them but a trifling time to dispose of a large mass of

My herons, "Tom" and "Peggy," were plucky in the extreme, and, though peace able enough when not imposed upon, resented fiercely any domineering from the barn-yard inhabitants. Their combined forces were always more than sufficient to rout the enemy. Once only we witness mstance of their partial discomfiture. "Tom" had accepted the challenge of a bullying young rooster, and at the first pass was placed hars du combat, with a spur through his throat. Before the cock had time to sound his clarion of victory, "Peggy," with a savage cry, came darting through the air and, alighting full on his back, by a fierce stroke of her spear-like bill deprived him of an eye. So vigorously did she follow up her advantage that the nergetle interference was required to save the fowl from complete destruction. "Tom's" wound was so severe that a considerable portion of his internal anatomy



NEST OF THE GREEN HERON. vas exposed; nevertheles she recovered rapidly. A contraction of the gullet followed, which afterwards often caused him great astonishment by refusing to passeuch large articles as formerly. Occasionally he would attempt to swallow a dried sun-fish or other spiny object, which, sticking fast, could be neither cast up nor down. A little water, with some careful manipulations, always relieved him from his unpleasant predicament; but to the last, experience did not render him wiser on this point. Their ex-ceeding tameness exposed them to great danger when they chanced to wander from their adopted home; and their fate, at last,

was that of being stoned to death. Taken all in all, were it not for the disapproval of man, the heron's "lot would be a happy one," in contradiction to that of the policeman in the comic opera. Abundance of food and ability for self-protection would seem advantages sufficient to compass all the desirable ends of bird life. Their range is quite extensive, going beyond the United States. They are resident south of the frost line, far into Central America. Many attitudes of these herons are extremely grace-ful, and their carriage and near appearance is always most pleasing. They are de-scribed as "above, dark green with bronzy fridescence, and below, mostly dark brownish ash or wine color, varied with white." The eyes are brilliantly golden, while the lores, or naked skin about the face, as well as the legs, are greenish yellow. A welldeveloped crest of dark metallic green

the bird is excited. The lesser herons, though common enough in tropical countries, are quite peculiar to the family was startled by a terrific racket, North America in the temperate zone. Con-spicuous birds, as a feature of our rural life, are now entirely too scarce. It is devoutly to be hoped that thoughtless people, at no distant day, will find reason to give way, but came right up through the hard up the causaless persecution of them.

JUDGE MERRICK.



judge by President Pierce in 1854, and JUDGE MERRICK. his record as a judge on all questions apart from those affecting slavery was excellent. The court of which he was judge was, however, legislated out of existence in 1883. An interesting incident that occurred during the early mouths of the war had Judge Merrick for its central figure.

A boy had enlisted in the army, and his

district beach. He

had been appointed

parents objected. They applied to Judge Merrick for a writ of babeas corpus. He.issued it. The man who attempted to serve see the war-like nations of it was arrested by Fitz John Porter. On sauerkraut at each other. the day the writ was returnable a sen-tinel was placed at Justice Merrick's door by Secretary Seward, and he stayed there five weeks. During all that time Judge Merrick remained indoors. On his retirement from the bench in 1883 he went back to Baltimore to practice law. In 1871 and 1873 Judge Merrick represented the Fifth Maryland district in Congress. His father was a United States Senator from Maryland. and his brother, R. T. Merrick, was famous as one of the defense in the Andrew Johnson impeachment trial, as one of the counsel before the Electoral Commission, and after-

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DANGER IN SAUERKRAUT.

A Barrel of the Fragrant Stuff Explodes and Nearly Kills a Man. Another dangerous explosive has been overed, says the Cleveland Press. It is sauerkrant. A Philadelphia man made discovery. He put a lot of fresh sauerkraut the bird is excited. days later he wandered down cellar to see and the next moment the man came out of the cellar in a great hurry. At least it is presumed that he was in a great hurry, because he did not wait to come up the stairwood floor and never stopped until he had driven his head half way through the ceil-The Eminent Washington Jurist Recently was noticed that there was an irregular row of barrel staves sticking out of his side. Judge William Merrick, who died recent- His personal appearance was ly in Washington, was one of the ablest what discouraging to his best friends.

There was sauerkraut in his eyes and ears and whiskers. In fact, there appeared President Cleveland to be more or less sauerkraut appeinted him to the Supreme bench of seemed visibly agitated. The principal the District of Co-lumbia as a vindica-was because he yelled so loud that the tion from the fancied disgrace visited rushing out of their houses in a terrible After the excitement had subsided upon him twenty fright. years ago, when he sufficiently to make an investigation, it was also occupied the found that there was a six-inch plastering district bench. He of sauerkraut over the walls and every thing else in the cellar. The barrel of sauerkraut had exploded. Since this little incident took place, a German scientist, who keeps a stand on the market and cuts up nearly five hundred cabbages a day, has explained to a venturesome reporter that when a cask of kraut is sealed when very fresh, there is sure to be more or less trouble. As the stuff ferments it swells, and if it is in a tightly-corked barrel a cask

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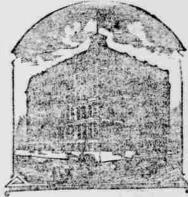
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